

DON'T SELL ME - PERSUADE ME

By Julia O'Connor

Trade shows have the disadvantage of compressed time. You might have 30 seconds or 30 minutes but it's not a regular sales call. You can't talk faster all you can do is just listen closely to the attendees and try to persuade them that your firm can solve their problems.

Here are nine conversation points, and examples, to consider when speaking with people at trade shows to persuade them instead of selling them.

AUTHORITY - Why are you important? What gives you the authority to ask for a clients business? Perhaps it's your firm's expertise in a certain area, or a partner's experience. It should not be because your company has a long history or is the newest widget-maker on the block.

TIP - It has to be a proactive, not a reactive, reason. "We've taken the position that e-learning is critical. We developed a great program in-house that improved our sales productivity 45%, and now we're sharing it with others in our industry."

COMMITMENT - Is your firm committed to your industry? Are you a leader or just in the pack?

TIP - Don't say you're committed to customer service, tell me how. "We found that 85% of our customer service calls come during regular business hours, but we never want you to have to wait for an answer, so our 800 number and online help desk are staffed 24/7."

CONFORMITY - Are you certified? In every industry, some form of certification carries importance and gives you and your firm authority. Knowing that as a consulting firm, half of your staff are CPAs, lets them know

that you conform to accounting standards.

TIP - Don't just tell me why you are ISO9000 certified; tell me why it's important to your company. "We were the first HVAC company in this area to be certified and it really helps us focus our goals to service clients like you."

CONSISTENCY - Clients want to know you have a track record and that you'll maintain it when they remain with you.

TIP - Explain how you maintain the consistency. "We're spending \$5million in R&D this year for product improvement, but we'll always stock the MX49 that your firm uses, because we own that mold."

CONTRAST - How are you different from your competitors? Avoid giving your competitor a plug and don't refer to them by name.

TIP - Answer questions with a comment that shows your company's leadership. "We're aware other firms are taking the low road, but we've always preferred the high road because the vision is better."

CONFLICT (2 TYPES)- This area can be broken into two separate areas. If there's a twinge of personality clash either personal or business related in your conversation, pass the visitor over to another staff member.

Personal Conflict- we all like to do business with people for whom we have a good personal feeling, so if there's a twinge of personality clash in your conversation, pass the visitor over to another staff member.

TIP - You don't want to blow a deal because he or she didn't "like" you. "You know, I think Sam has a better handle on your concerns, so let me introduce you to him now."

Business Related Conflict- This is business - In today's fast, competitive world, not everyone is aware of the relationships on the business side, or if there is a history your firm has with the visitor's firm.

TIP - Be up to date on your company's status, ask about relationship problems before the show. "Yes, I understand we didn't get the bid for the job in Chile, but since we added enterprise software our costs have reduced considerably. I know we'll be more aggressive on your next bid."

RECIPROCATE - Is this a potential partnership? Every client should be viewed as a partner. Sometimes, you have to give more in a partnership than you get.

TIP - Don't view the reciprocity as a guaranteed 50-50 relationship. "We'll be happy to include co-op advertising in our agreement with you. All we ask is, when the advertising works for you, that you refer other wholesalers like your firm to us."

SCARCITY - How unique are your firm's talents, products and services? What makes me have to choose you?

TIP - Be certain of your facts before you boast - "Are you aware we are the only firm to provides secure Internet access for coffee grinder repair shops?"

After years of informal instruction, Trade Show Training was incorporated to provide structured training ranging from trade show basics to the ergonomics of exhibit design. She designed Camp Sho-M-Sel-M to improve sales staff performance in the trade show environment.

She holds degrees from The University of Georgia in Advertising, an MA in Mass Communications from The University of Iowa, and an Indiana University MBA in Marketing. She is a frequent speaker on marketing, networking, entrepreneurship and trade shows.

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Julia has always been in sales. She has always focused on getting the results and to obtain this she will guide, train, and teach.

Her careers range from public and professional education design, to freelance advertising-public relations, to real estate investment portfolio management.

Since 1982, Julia has been working with clients in trade show marketing.